

**Governor's Proposed Budget FY18-FY-19
Appropriations Hearing, Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017**

Submitted by Richard Porth, United Way of Connecticut

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the important investments the state is making through the Department of Housing to help end chronic homelessness in Connecticut. My name is Richard Porth and I serve as the CEO of United Way of Connecticut.

Thanks to the leadership of Governor Malloy and the Department of Housing and the ongoing support of the legislature, Connecticut is making progress to end homelessness – saving lives and saving public dollars. Preserving state investments in frontline homeless services, permanent supportive housing, and support services including the State's Coordinated Access Network, saves public resources and helps families and individuals transition to housing, establish stability, and ultimately achieve their full potential.

Governor Malloy's announcement in January that every chronically homeless individual had been matched to permanent housing was cause for celebration for many reasons. Connecticut is leading the nation in fighting homelessness due the state's investment in affordable housing and in a system built upon the collective effort of government agencies, numerous nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, housing advocates and housing providers. Through this public-private collaboration, we have demonstrated that government can tackle big problems and achieve unprecedented success.

Department of Housing investments in affordable housing have allowed for the construction of 9,037 affordable housing units over the last few years. Funding for an additional 5,200 units has been secured and 2,943 affordable units are currently under construction. These efforts coupled with the accelerated work of Connecticut's Zero: 2016 effort resulted in 1,200 chronically homeless individuals being matched with housing since January of 2015 making Connecticut:

- The first state in the nation to end chronic homelessness among veterans (August 2015).
- The second state in the nation to end homelessness among all veterans (February 2016); and
- The first state in the nation to successfully match all chronically homeless persons to a housing resource. (December 2016).

All of you who have had a hand in these achievements deserve much credit. Now, the challenge is to sustain this great achievement. We have learned that we can do this AND at the same time save tax payer dollars.

Data from a study conducted by the University of Connecticut indicates that it costs the state more than \$33,000 annually for an individual experiencing homelessness and more than \$122,000 for a family experiencing homelessness. Continued investments in efforts to end homelessness will reduce the need for costly hospital visits, emergency care and public safety services and yield a savings of up to 70 percent for towns and cities. In addition to money saved, every dollar spent on housing efforts is an investment in a stronger Connecticut and increases the vitality of our communities.

Connecticut United Ways and Connecticut 2-1-1 share the belief that everyone deserves a place to call home. In 2014, 2-1-1 Connecticut became the central intake point for Connecticut's Coordinated Access Network (CAN). Coordinated Access helps people who are homeless or imminently homeless access community resources within eight regions, aimed at fulfilling the HEARTH Act's goals of: 1.) avoiding homelessness whenever possible; 2.) minimizing the length of stay in shelter; and 3.) preventing the need to re-enter shelter after leaving. This is accomplished through collaboration among many community and state and local government partners under state leadership.

Individuals and families experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis can call 2-1-1 from anywhere in the state to start the process and 2-1-1 finds community services and supports that helps them to avoid homelessness or 2-1-1 connects them to the CAN in the caller's community. In 2016, 2-1-1 handled more than 95,000 service requests related to housing and shelter which equates to nearly 8,000 requests per month. 2-1-1 is proud to be partners with the state, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, dozens of shelter providers and public and nonprofit agencies, and the Partnership for Strong Communities in this crucial work to end chronic homelessness.

Thank you for your continued commitment to addressing homelessness in Connecticut. It is the right thing to do, good for our people, good for our communities and good for Connecticut.